



North Dakota Department of Health

SEVERE ACUTE RESPIRATORY SYNDROME COMMUNICATION POLICY

Policy for Release of Information Concerning SARS Cases

Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) is a disease first reported in Asia, North America and Europe in 2003. No probable cases were identified in North Dakota.

The following information details North Dakota Department of Health procedures for releasing information about potential cases of SARS in the state.

The North Dakota Department of Health is bound by state confidentiality laws to protect the identity and privacy of people who are infected with diseases, including SARS, while at the same time protecting the public's health. If a case of SARS is reported in North Dakota, the Department of Health will provide the following information to the media:

- County of residence of the SARS case
- If the person was hospitalized or not; if the person was released from the hospital
- Current status: improving, stable, deceased, etc.
- General symptoms
- Risk factors (travel to China, exposure to SARS patient, etc.)
- Age range
 - By decade – teens, 20s, 30s, 40s, etc.
 - Child younger than 13

Information will be released only after the department has consulted with the patient's health-care provider and after the provider has communicated with the patient or the patient's family. The Department of Health also will consult with the local public health unit in which the person resides.

The release of any additional information about the patient by a health-care provider or medical facility is determined by the policy of that institution; however, the department will not be able to confirm or deny information released by others because of state confidentiality laws.

If you have any questions, please contact Loreeta Leer Frank, North Dakota Department of Health, at 701.328.2372.

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